

GENDER ASSESSMENT RWANDA ISP: 2004 –2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

February 27, 2003

INTRODUCTION

It is now 9 years since the genocide that devastated Rwanda. As the ten-year anniversary approaches, it is becoming increasingly important that this country define itself in more positive terms if tolerance is to hold and if the foundations for a unified country are to take root. Ingrained in the common psyche and the need to move forward is the recognition that Rwandan society is not the same, everything that was familiar has changed and has to be renegotiated. The renegotiation of gender relations has emerged as one of the over-riding factors in the development of a new Rwanda.

The GOR has demonstrated a great commitment to gender equality. Decision-makers in ministries, NGOs and donors have all shown a strong commitment to gender mainstreaming. Key instruments to facilitate this have already been put into place: there's a new Constitution, the National Poverty Reduction Strategy is finalized, a National Gender Policy has been created, an affirmative action agenda to increase women's participation at the political level has been launched, discriminatory legal structures have been identified and are in the process of reform, and the decentralization program that the government has embarked upon all represent unique opportunities to mainstream gender in development planning.

This assessment has been developed from a desk review drawing on recent gender analyses, the PRSP, the GOR Gender Plan of Action and other government reports aimed at identifying potential gender issues in the program and recommending steps for the mission to follow in promoting gender equality in the implementation of a new country strategy over the next four years. The two questions that were addressed are:

- How have gender relations been affected by the genocide? and,
- Which strategies should be pursued to enhance women's bargaining power in decision-making in the transition to development?

THE GENDERED CHALLENGE TO DEVELOPMENT IN RWANDA

Gender identities and relations are, as a result of any conflict, in a continuous state of flux. There is clear evidence that the situation in Rwanda since the 1994 genocide have created opportunities for strategic gains in women's rights and bargaining power, especially over land rights. Gender identities are being transformed through legal reforms, changes in employment patterns, propaganda, cultural discourse, and education and socialization of children.

Demographic Changes

The 1994 civil war and genocide created major distortions in the sex ratio of the Rwandan population resulting in a high incidence of female-headed households. The 2000 national census confirmed the demographic changes that have taken place in the country. Within a population of 8.1 million people, 54% are women and 46% men, except in Kigali, where

there are more men than women, possibly due to migration, demobilization and the need to develop survival mechanisms. As a result of the genocide, 21.5% of adult women are widows and 34% of Rwanda's households are headed by women, of whom 62.15% are below the poverty line and a significant percentage are children. Of male-headed households, 54.32% are below the poverty line. 60% of the population in the productive age bracket is female. 56% of all Rwandans are illiterate, with a nearly equal balance between females (52%) and males (48%) (National Gender Plan of Action).

Changes in Social Relations

A significant result of the civil war is the change in social relations between women and men. The war resulted in expanded responsibilities for women as the men either joined the army or militias, or were killed. For a long time, patriarchal attitudes and practices have permeated Rwandan politics and society. While gender roles and responsibilities have changed, the conflict appears to have reinforced these attitudes amongst those engaged in the actual fighting, primarily the military and the men in prisons. As men return to their communities they are finding that their power is eroded, as they cannot fulfill their role as providers for the home. This often results in lost self-esteem and respect, which can then lead to increased violence against women and children. The greatest concern is that those being reintegrated are coming back to communities where a third or more of the households can be headed by women, who have been managing and developing skills for economic survival and decision-making. Many of the returning men expect that, even without the economic means to support a household, they retain rights to determining its status. This will be a particular problem with demobilization of soldiers and those released from prison and where there is high unemployment with large numbers of frustrated men seeking to return to "normalcy". This is a recipe for social conflict.

GENDER, GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY

In traditional Rwanda, power has been distributed unequally between genders as well as between regions and ethnic groups. A gender analysis of power and institutions is required to underpin understanding of how interventions might serve or damage women's interests and what could be supported to further these.

Gender, Legislation and Legal Reforms

The GOR has demonstrated great commitment to gender equality. The establishment of the Ministry of Gender and the Advancement of Women (MIGEPROFE) has been a key step towards the advancement of women. The government has also taken steps to increase female political participation through the creation of women's councils at all political levels and promoting affirmative action in local governments. The marital and inheritance codes have been reviewed and strengthened to provide for co-ownership of property and assets by married couples. A new land policy has been enacted and is designed to ensure to support women's rights to land. A Gender Plan of Action was adopted in 2000. Finally, the recently adopted constitution approves only civil, monogamous marriages and guarantees equal pay and rights to private property. It also requires that 24 of the 80 elected members of the Chamber of Deputies be women. Of the 26 members of the Senate, 8 of them will be appointed by the President, "who shall ensure the representation of historically marginalized communities," presumably including women.

Justice and the "Gacaca" Process

It is believed that the process of local justice implemented by the traditional “gacaca” courts will provide the speediest and most effective manner for healing the trauma of the 1994 genocide. While these “gacaca” are viewed by the international community as a much-needed way to achieve justice and reconciliation, there are critical gender issues that need to be addressed. Over 200,000 women were victims of some form of sexual violence in 1994, both as a strategy to humiliate Tutsi women and have them bear Hutu children and generally as a result of the breakdown in law and order.

In 2001 there were only 37 female police officers out of 3,000 officers in the police force, while another 166 have been recruited, these are still too few to have the desired impact of addressing a traumatized female population.

Decentralization, Representation and Decision Making

The highly centralized system that operated before 1994 is perceived as having limited the population from participating in governance. The current GOR strategy is to increase participation through the decentralization of all political, economic and administrative structures. With USAID assistance to local governance initiatives, local elections held in 1999 produced 160,000 new local government officials, of whom 30% are estimated to be women. Women’s councils were also set up at the cellule, secteur, commune and prefecture level, and are intended to provide local women with a say in their communities on issues of health, education and development. These councils, in addition to the women elected to the local government councils in 1999 are expected to ensure that there is strong movement towards gender equity in political representation.

Challenges to Promoting Gender Equality

The new marriage, inheritance and land laws could have major consequences for women. As these move forward, it will be difficult to protect women’s rights due to the constraints not only at the legal and technical levels, but also because they are political issues.

GENDER AND EMERGING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

The 1994 conflict has had wide-ranging effects on the division of labor, especially in economic responsibility and access and control of resources between women and men. Changes to women’s economic roles have included the need to provide for households in the absence of men. Female-headed households have increased but are poorer. Women have assumed some traditionally male roles and there is now a rise in the number of women petty traders. The clear gender imbalances in the population mean that more women are better placed to take advantage of opportunities for off-farm income generating activities, as well as credit facilities.

Land and Property Rights

Access to land is a key issue in which women have traditionally been severely disadvantaged. Lack of property rights has meant that many women risked being displaced from their lands by male relatives returning from prison or neighboring countries, where many sought refuge during and after the genocide. Prior to 1994, Rwanda was essentially an agrarian country with over 90% of the population dependent on subsistence agriculture in which women constituted 80% of the farmers. Land holdings for 95% of the farms tend to be less than 2 hectares and there is still a population density of 317 persons per square kilometer, contributing to the challenge of development. The government’s agriculture-led poverty reduction approach is bound to raise gender conflicts about who controls land and who has

rights to the benefits it provides, with the possibility that the new land reforms efforts will be vigorously challenged. USAID and other donors are encouraged to closely monitor the implementation of this Act [WHICH ACT??] and the associated Inheritance Act that now guarantees rights to women, as land will be the most contested resource in a land where there are few other resources.

High Value Agricultural Commodities and Specialized Coffee

Rwanda has recently had international marketing success with its specialized coffee processed in Maraba by a rural cooperative society of whom 60% are women survivors of genocide or wives of inmates. With the Fair Trade certification that they received, the price per kilo has risen to more than four times what they were receiving locally and the cooperative has expanded from 450 members to 1500. As agricultural commodities that will be supported are identified, it is important that an analysis of whom they will benefit is undertaken to ensure that there is some equity.

Credit and Savings

WIT's programs of assistance in agriculture and petty trade have had great success in providing revolving micro-credit loans to women in vulnerable situations. These are quite revolutionary, as historically Rwandese women required the husband's signature so that they could acquire a loan. The loans, to a maximum of RWF 40,000, were to be repaid and put in a fund for the commune to use in assisting orphans. Since its inception in 1996, approximately \$1 million has been invested in the WIT program through various approaches and mechanisms. This program has had a number of successes. For example, as of September 2002, women's solidarity groups under WIT in Byumba and Kigali Rural provinces averaged an estimated repayment rate of 98%. SERUKA also provides micro-credit to rural and urban women but has difficulties in collecting repayments from urban loan recipients, a probable indication of the difficult economic conditions of poor urban women. SERUKA and other organizations also offer training for rural women's organizations, advice, technical assistance and other resources to promote income-generating activities.

USAID expects to design a follow-on program to the WIT micro-credit activity that will be scaled up to provide larger size loans that may be accessed through micro finance institutions. A major concern is that the size of the loan and the geographical coverage in which these activities operate provides little more than survival and poverty alleviation strategies. It is unlikely that these will result in major savings that will impact significantly on the GDP unless there is wider national spread reaching many more recipients. It is important that the mission consider providing several levels of loans with a view to ensure that the objective of the micro-credit activity is to see the graduation of loan recipients to continually higher levels while retaining good repayment levels so that the women assisted do not find themselves in a trap that keeps them at the survival level. Another concern is to identify where rural men in particular, many of whom have no employment opportunities and are being challenged on control of land as an asset, are accessing micro-credit. The mission needs to consider expanding the program to ensure that providing credit to women does not itself become a source of conflict, in home and community, as men become marginalized.

Rural Infrastructure

As Rwanda is primarily rural, rural roads infrastructure plays a vital role in the economic development of the country. The success of the government's agriculture-led poverty alleviation strategy is dependent on increasing and diversifying farm production, raising farm income and standards of living. Strong linkages exist between improved rural access to

markets, employment and poverty alleviation. The mission needs to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in the rural infrastructure program so that the concerns of women are effectively addressed through employment generation, improved roads and access to rural markets and other associated services such as family planning, health, and education. In the identification of sites for construction, it may be necessary to conduct studies to determine which areas will not add unintended burdens to women's workload. While it is highly possible that poor women will benefit from a Food for Work approach in the construction of roads, and some will self select, the assumption that the approach will uniformly have positive impacts needs to be reassessed from a gender perspective, as women's needs and interests are not homogeneous.

THE SITUATION OF GENDER, HEALTH AND HIV/AIDS

The disruption to the health system during the war has led to the total lack of capacity to carry out programs in the sector. There is a shortage of qualified health staff, management experience and administration skills. There are major financial resources, especially for HIV/AIDS, but inadequate capacity to handle the funds. A major consequence of the civil war and genocide has been the reduction in the contraceptive prevalence rate from 21% in 1994 to 7% in 1996, with a resultant rise in unwanted pregnancies and maternal mortality. Early marriage remains common and is a contributing factor to high fertility rates. Maternal mortality rates rank as one of the highest in all of Africa at 1071 per 100,000 births (exceeded only by Angola at 1,500 and Ethiopia at 1,400) and only 25% of rural women receive professional assistance at delivery.

Cost Recovery

Pilot pre-payment insurance schemes in Kabgayi, Byumba and Kabutare have been introduced as part of a healthcare cost recovery strategy with support from the mission. There is an annual fee of RWF 2500 for a family of 7 for healthcare services at health centers. An analysis of how healthcare decisions are made at the household level, who determines if and when interventions are sought, and who pays has yet to be done. Given that 34% of households in Rwanda are headed by women, 62.15% of whom are below the poverty line, it is important to determine how many of these women have access to healthcare and whether they are likely to opt out of cost-recovery schemes, as this could marginalize them further.

HIV/AIDS

The use of rape and forced prostitution during the civil war and genocide contributed greatly to the spread of HIV/AIDS, with devastating impacts. The estimated prevalence rate is 11% [ISN'T 8.9% THE # THE MISSION IS USING?] and rising. Sexually transmitted infections are prevalent, increasing the risk of HIV transmission. Increased poverty as a result of the war has placed great numbers of vulnerable households at risk of exposure. In addition, the number of rape victims is estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands. It is estimated that 30% of the women between the ages of 13 and 35 were likely the victims of sexual violence during the violence in 1994. Both DHS and FHI/IMPACT are collecting sex-disaggregated data on factors such as means of transmission, level of knowledge, condom use, care and treatment choices. They have also undertaken a Behavior Surveillance Surveys related to knowledge, attitudes and behaviors that should allow the mission to assess the situation of both men and women and set clear goals and objectives in its programming.

Management of Community Health Care

In supporting the decentralization of health care services, there are concerns about women's participation. Traditionally, only men discuss community issues. USAID should develop a strategy for promoting women's representation and building skills for effective participation in decision-making.

EDUCATION AND LITERACY

In 1996, 55% of females and 48% of males were illiterate. This has been a critical constraint to women's advancement across all sectors. Although girls appear to do better than boys in primary schools, they have a higher drop-out rate due to a combination of factors, including: early marriage, the need for older girls to assist with domestic chores and care for younger children, and a rise in sexual harassment of girls in schools. The widest gender gap in education is at the tertiary level with only 26% females. The mission needs to address the possibility of continuing and expanding scholarship programs to include all sectors, not just governance, as a strategy for encouraging an increase in the number of women in professional positions.

MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN USAID/RWANDA STRATEGY

Whatever intervention choices USAID makes, they will have an impact on gender relations. Distribution of resources, capacity building, and delivery of services will all affect women and men, in that these actions will change or reinforce the status quo. The mission needs to identify a specific gender impact that it is seeking to achieve. It must establish criteria to achieve gender specific results and hold SO Teams and partners accountable.

KEY CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Representation:** Participation of women has been a significant factor in the peace process. This must be scaled up during the reconstruction process in governance spheres, starting with the grassroots as is already happening with the councils. Effective representation to increase leadership for women should form part of each sector program.
- **Access to Resources:** Care should be taken that women do not lose control of the resources they have gained by increasing their legal control over land, etc.
- **Capacity Building:** Each sector within the mission includes some education and training activities in which female participation is often a requirement. This provides opportunities for the mission to ensure that a strategic approach is taken to ensure that women are placed at a 50% level of participation in any mission-supported education, training, and information communications technologies initiative to redress the imbalances that exist due to a lack of insufficient training opportunities and skills development.

RECOMMENDED ILLUSTRATIVE MISSION APPROACHES

- Translate recommendations of the existing gender analyses into policy and practice. This includes formalizing the Gender Action Committee and providing it with specific resources to address mission gender needs.
- Develop a mission-wide gender strategy and mandate all implementing partners to re-assess their developmental objectives to ensure they have taken a strategic approach to gender considerations.

- Provide gender training and TA to mission personnel and staff of implementing partners to ensure that there's a common understanding of the issues.
- Ensure that Contracting documents adhere to the ADS requirements. This should be supported by stricter enforcement to ensure that no RFAs and other contracting documents are passed without having addressed gender concerns.

SECTOR SPECIFIC ILLUSTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

SO 5: Democracy and Governance:

- Support the revision of discriminatory laws that fall within the family code, law of identity, residence and nationality
- Support the proposal for the creation of sexual violence desks[NOT SURE WHAT THIS MEANS??] in each jurisdiction
- Provide training to the civilian police force to address issues of gender especially to victims of sexual violence
- Identify expanded roles for men to ensure minimal gender violence as a result of conflicting gender roles.[NOT SURE WHAT THIS MEANS]
- Encourage and support a caucus of women parliamentarians and ensure they are provided with the necessary training, research and ITC skills to ensure effective participation when elected.
- Continue and expand the scholarship program to include all the sectors the mission works in as a strategy towards encouraging more women into professional positions.
- Develop baseline data to support the program.

SO6: Health and HIV/AIDS:

- Identify gender concerns in the policy environment by means of preliminary gender analyses
- Take gender inequalities into account before financing, resource allocation and management of health sector
- Expand the health statistics to ensure that measurements of women's health are routinely collected
- Conduct specific health and gender assessments and provide guidance to implementing partners on the development of gender specific targets and gender-sensitive indicators
- Strengthen capacity of implementing partners to identify gender considerations and gender-sensitive interventions
- Strengthen women's leadership in local health-related decision making bodies
- Strengthen donor coordination on gender and health

SO7: Economic Growth:

- Undertake a gender analysis of the agriculture sector to assist in defining entry points and opportunities
- Assess the gender dimensions of cooperatives and farmer associations and provide the necessary TA to ensure that women are not marginalized when these are successful.
- Define and develop credit programs that will have impact at a national level.
- Mainstream gender into the rural roads infrastructure program by identifying the gender issues in an analysis.